DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 255 473 SP 025 733

AUTHOR Kronowitz, Ellen
TITLE Views of Teacher Training from the Other Side of the Desk.
PUB DATE [84]
NOTE 9p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Elementary Education; *Elementary School Students; *Student Evaluation of Teacher Performance; Student Reaction; *Student Teachers; *Teacher Behavior; *Teacher Effectiveness

ABSTRACT

Two pilot studies are described that attempted to determine the reliability of children as evaluators of student teacher performance. The first study sought to determine the accuracy of elementary students' perceptions of the role of the student teacher and the training process itself. It appeared that generally the students had quite accurate perceptions of the role of the student teacher, the training process, and the motivation for teaching. In the second study, questionnaires were designed to determine the reliability of children as evaluators of teaching behaviors and the quality of the student teacher's performance. Children at all grade levels (K-5) discriminated among teacher behaviors and there was high agreement between pupils' ratings and those of supervising teachers. There was an indication that pupils can reliably assess growth in a student teacher. The pupils' mean ratings in each category were less inflated than those of the adults, especially the self-ratings by the student teachers themselves. (JD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED255473

Views of Teacher Training from the Other Side of the Desk

ABSTRACT

Children are seldom asked to participate in the teacher training process, although two pilot studies point to the possibility that they know a great deal about the student teaching process, can discriminate among teaching behaviors and guage student teachers' effectiveness at least as reliably as trained adult supervisors.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

E. Kronowitz

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

025733

Ellen Kronowitz
Associate Professor
California State University,
San Bernardino

Views of Teacher Training from the Other Side of the Desk

Let's face it. Without children there can be no teacher training. They are the prime players in the drama (or trauma) we call student teaching. The children are observed, interviewed, tutored, grouped, taught, tested and disciplined by student teachers. They interact with student teachers for a longer time period and with more intensity than any other individual or group during the training process. As a result, they also have the inside scoop on how well the student teacher is actually meeting their needs, regardless of what the master teacher or supervisor might think. But does anyone ever ask them to guage the student teacher's effectiveness? Not often. Do they know anything about the teacher training process itself or the role of the student teacher? If asked can they discern strengths and weaknesses of a student teacher's performance? Are children reliable evaluators or are they at least as reliable as the adults who are empowered with the evaluation role?

These questions have fascinated me since my own student teaching days and I have conducted two pilot studies (Kronowitz, 1982; Kronowitz and Finney, 1983) which may shed some light on the answers.

A Study of Children's Perceptions of Student Teaching

The purpose of the first pilot study (Kronowitz, 1982) was

to determine the accuracy of elementary students' perceptions of the role of the student teacher and the training process itself. Other prime players such as the master teacher, the college supervisor and the student teacher usually are oriented to the process. Since children rarely are oriented to student teaching, I set out to explore the naturally occuring conceptions and/or misconceptions of the uninitiated.

The childrens' perceptions were explored through the use of an open-ended questionaire which was administered by the student teacher in the room. The sample size was seventy-four with equal numbers of boys and girls distributed in grades K, 1, 2, 4, 5. Responses were categorized and coded to facilitate computer analysis.

In response to the first question posed by the student teachers, Do you know who I am?, 98.6% of the children knew who the student was or responded with the correct name. Responses to the second item, Why am I here?, distributed evenly among three categories: to teach (31%), to help (32%), to learn (32%), with only 4% of the children, two in kindergarten and one in second grade viewing the student teacher's role as vistior or observer.

Responses to the third item, What is a student teacher?, distributed among three categories: a helper (50%), a practice teacher (34%), and I don't know (16%). It is interesting to note that a greater percentage of responses fell into the "helping" category when the question was asked in a less personalized way than it was asked in the preceding item. Only at grade levels two (75%) and five (53%) did a large percentage of children

perceive the student teacher as a "practice teacher."

A question which probed children's perceptions of the length of the training process yielded surprisingly realistic responses with 78.4% of the sample responding in the one to three year range.

When asked, Why do you think I want to be a teacher?, 83.6% of the responses distributed among four categories: to teach, to get paid, for fun, to learn. These are so very similar to responses by student teachers during screening interviews.

When asked what student teachers should do when kids misbehave, students responded with the prevailing mode of discipline used in the individual classrooms. Common responses were time out, ejection from the room, detention and more work. Only thirteen children in the entire sample suggested verbal reprimand. This may tell us something about children's willingness to internalize our more punitive discipline strategies.

Some very interesting advice was elicited by the item, What one thing can you tell me about kids that will help me to be a better teacher? While more than 20% of the responses reflected negative self-images (kids are brats, they are very tricky) a lareger percentage included responses which stressed that kids can learn and that teachers should refrain from yelling and screaming while maintaining firm discipline.

Generally the students had quite accurate perceptions of the role of the student teacher, the training process and the motivation for teaching. The responses, however, seemed to be colored by how the student teacher initially was introduced and

how much the children were told about the stranger in their midst. Children are curious, they want to know. Let's let them in on the big secret and help them square their perceptions with reality.

A Study of Children's Reliability as Evaluators

If we accept that children know more than we tell them about the process and in fact have quite accurate perceptions, can they become more involved in the actual feedback process during student teaching? Can they discriminate one teaching behavior from another, and judge the quality of the student teacher's performance as do the college supervisors, master teachers and principals?

A graduate assistant and I explored these questions (Kronowitz and Finney, 1983) to see if the children could be a reliable source of information given the frequency and intensity of their contact with the student teacher.

An instrument was designed to parallel the official assessment form in use at California State University, San Bernardino. The official form is scored on a five point scale and the parallel student form was similarly scored, but using stars (***) instead of numerals. Five stars represented the highest score and one the lowest. Each pupil was instructed to draw at least one star and as many as five in response to each item.

Planning -- My student teacher plans what to teach me ahead of time.

Instructional Skill -- My student teacher teaches us so that we learn.

Evaluation -- My student teacher knows what we're good at and what we need help in.

Classroom Organization -- My student teacher makes the classroom run smoothly.

Classroom Behavior/Discipline -- My student teacher gets good behavior from us.

The sample consisted of six classes, grades kindergarten through five and the six student teachers and their master teachers and one University supervisor. Procedures were developed to ensure a simple, clear and uniform set of instructions to the children.

The evaluation forms were administered to the children, student teachers, college supervisor and master teachers. After five weeks of student teaching (mid-quarter) and again after 10 weeks at the end of the quarter. Mean scores for each item by class were computed and compared with the ratings of the adult evaluators with in the same room (student teacher, master teacher and college supervisor).

Several conclusions were implicit in the data. Children at all grade levels discriminated among teacher behaviors as evidenced in the variance of mean scores, giving the highest ratings to instruction and the lowest to discipline.

There was also high agreement between the pupils mean scores and the adult scores. Where discrepencies existed, they rarely exceeded +1.5 points on the 5 point scale.

From pre to post administration, pupil ratings showed significant gains, perhaps an indication that pupils can reliably assess growth.

Finally the pupils mean ratings in each category were less inflated than those of the adults, especially the self-ratings by the student teachers themselves.

Conclusions

These pilot studies, while small in scope point to the possibility that children can be more active participants in the teacher training process. They generally know what student teaching is all about. The accuracy of their perceptions can be increased if they are given direct, honest information at the outset. A pupil orientation to student teaching seems warranted.

Children can seemingly discriminate among a variety of teaching behaviors and perceive growth in these behaviors over time. They were less inflated in their scores than adults but reliability with adult evaluators was high. Children are a potentially valuable untapped source of feedback. Let's clue them in and seek their counsel.

References

Kronowitz, E. (1982). Views on Student Teaching. California Journal of Teacher Education, 9(2), 67-83.

Kronowitz, E.,& Finney, V. (1983). Student Teachers' Performance. California Journal of Teacher Education, 10(1), 84-101.